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BIRD-LORE OF THE NORTHERN INDIANS

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Men and their manners naturally hold first rank in the attention of the student and traveler. And yet whatever contributes to our experience is also of equal importance whether it be found in the animal or vegetable kingdom. In the realm of nature, birds are such social, intelligent and active beings that in the combination of the two spheres of observation, man-kind and birds, we find pleasant and profitable employment. The world of bird-life seems to have engaged the lively interest of men in ancient as well as in modern times, for there is hardly any part of creation within the reach of our observations which exhibits a more glorious display. Such a variety of pleasing scenes as the bird world shows, ever changing throughout the seasons, arising from various causes, and destined for different purposes, naturally held a strong appeal to the primitive men who dwelt in the forests of North America. These scenes were free to the enjoyment and inspection of various tribes who developed different reactions to them under the influence of their differing inner lives. They observed that the order of birds, like themselves, constituted tribes and bands, separated by their different structure, manners and utterances, as each tribe, though subdivided into smaller groups, retains its form in customs and language particular to that nation or genus from which it seems to have descended.

It may be said, I think without exaggeration, that the native Indians live much closer to Nature than most white people could hope to do. Their knowledge of wild life is therefore inexhaustible in quantity though it is often far from being scientifically correct. From their childhood, girls are taught much practical botany, the identity and use of scores of plants.

The boys, accompanying their fathers on the hunt, learn the habits of wild animals with an intensity of interest that is only found in matters of vital importance. This applies of course to the tribes of the north who practice no agriculture and whose subsistence is gained solely by the hunt. In their natural history it is to be expected, moreover, that the Indians are better mammalogists than ornithologists, since the observation of birds is something of a fine art with them; not an essential to their success in the life-sustaining chase. Likewise, we also find that considerably more superstition, folk-lore and fancy at large, are connected with their knowledge of birds. The birds in general are considered by these people to form a race of beings, subdivided into tribes just as people are, with their head, chief and minor chiefs and local groups. Ordinarily the eagle is spoken of as the head chief of the birds but in the copious native mythology there is frequent mention of mythical birds such as the Wampum Bird, the Great Bird, the Wind Bird, and Gellu.¹ Their description makes them out to be monstrous creatures; in some stories they are more comparable to the Roc of European lore. It is needless to say that birds figure prominently in the mythology of the natives but the allusions are so numerous that to treat them one would have to summarize the whole body of tradition. The partridges figure somewhat as dupes in the stories, the owls as solemn or mischievous characters, the herons as majestic indifferent beings and many other smaller birds assume the rôles of helpers, hinderers, tell-tales and the like. In different stages of the same story perhaps the hero may assume a bird guise at one time, his own form or an animal guise at another. The stories also betray some interpretative ability on the part of the myth-makers because the psychological traits of the creatures, as they appear to the observer, are often faithfully brought out, as for instance friendliness, reciprocal obligation, malice, apathy, stealth, thievery and so on.

¹ Gellu has, however, in Penobscot some attributes ascribed to him which make it at least possible that the great auk, which formerly inhabited the New England coast, is meant.

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When, however, we come to what would correspond to actual Indian ornithology we find knowledge to be based really less upon observation than upon interpretation. We learn for instance that in some past age the reign of winter was uninterrupted by the intrusion of any warm season, and that a body of adventurers went to the southland to try to secure the "summer fluid" to bring it back north with them. This they did not succeed in doing until they had captured the summer birds from the south and brought them north. Having secured these, one of the characteristics of the summer season, summer itself followed in their wake and thenceforth has continued its annual habit.¹

NOTE.—We may take the Penobscot Indian names and beliefs as the basis of discussion in this paper, because from my own experience with this tribe I am more able to undertake etymological analysis and partially because the information is more abundant. The Penobscot occupied central and northern Maine. Related fables and names from the Malecite of St. Johns river, New Brunswick, the Abenaki of St. Francis, Canada, and the Micmac of Nova Scotia, are also given, since all these tribes belong to the same culture group, known in ethnographical literature as the Wabanaki. The dialects of the four tribes are fairly close, though, as we shall see, the bird names and indentities do not always correspond in all of them.

In giving the names, the Penobscot words are noted by Pen., the Malecite by Mal., the Micmac by Mic., and the St. Francis Abenaki by St. Fr. The numbers in parentheses are the American Ornithologists' Union check list numbers. These will provide for the ornithologist a reference list of the birds which I identified in the Penobscot country. I found C. A. Reed's Pocket Bird Guides very useful in this work in the Indian villages, as the informants could recognize the creatures from the cuts. In writing the Indian words it is necessary to use some characters that may not be understood. Crossed *l* (*l*) denotes a lateral not unlike the Polish sound or Welsh *ll*, *k* and *g* are not sharply differentiated, an aspiration following a vowel denotes an open breath following it, small *n* after and above the line of a vowel denotes nasalization, the long vowels are marked so above them, and small capital *A* is used to represent *u* as in *but*, while small capital *E* represents an obscure vowel like *e* in *her*.

¹ From the Saulteaux who live near the Height of Land in Ontario comes a version of the same tale, adding the pretty conception, however, of the Milky Way as "The Birds' Pathway" during the migrations.

The family of the divers and swimmers naturally claims a large share of the attention of the northern natives whose homes lie among the rivers and lakes where these large and conspicuous birds resort during the breeding season. Naturally, too, the natives have been close observers of the differences of cry and in appearance manifested in this family. The prominent temperamental and economic characteristics of these birds have caused them to appear as figures in many of the mythical narratives and beliefs of folk-lore. Among them the loon stands forth rather sharply. His name "choice, admired bird"¹ shows the esteem which he has earned by his constancy as a weather prophet, his beautiful plumage and his thrilling cry. The loon is regarded as a model of constancy both in story and in reality. To kill one is a sacrilege. Its attenuated cry, which echoes in stirring tones across the lakes and bays of the north, is regarded among the Wabanaki as a wail of grief for the loss of a lover; which event forms the theme of a legend. A brother and sister enamoured of one another, the story runs, eloped. Hotly pursued by their kinfolk, they were overtaken at last while crossing a frozen lake. At the moment when punishment was about to be administered, the ice gave way, the pair sank out of sight before the eyes of the indignant pursuers and rose again the next instant in the form of the loon, uttering the cry which is still the call of these mysterious birds. The lovers then became the celestial constellation which we call Orion. To the ears of European and Indian this cry has taken different values. The French Canadians hear it as *huard*, while in Ontario the Ojibwa hear it as *mānk*.

The Micmac say that to hear a passing loon give forth a laugh is a sign of coming happiness, but the mournful cry of the bird is to them harbinger of sorrow. The loon again

¹ (A. O. U. 7) Pen. *mēde'wīte*, "choice, admired bird," Mal. *Agwūn*. The Red-throated Loon (A. O. U. 11) is Pen. *māngwis*. The corresponding *mank* is also the name of the common Loon in Ojibwa of Ontario. It is noticeable how inconstant are the identities and names in their distribution among various northern tribes whose languages are at the same time embraced in the single Algonkian stock.

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figures in the mental imagery of the Micmac as the favorite bird of the deity Gluskap. The bird, it seems, originally had but one utterance, a laughing cry, during the sojourn of Gluskap upon the earth. Upon the departure of the deity from the world, however, the loon gave utterance to a long mournful cry which thenceforth became one of its characteristics.

Cormorants ply their way all summer along the salt water ways of the country of the Wabanaki. Their peculiar form and their manner of squatting on rocks or projections near the water, has earned them an allegorical name, a rather plain, homely allusion. The Penobscot call the bird "old heel,"¹ from its fancied resemblance to an old worn-out moccasin lodged in a cleft of the shore.

The great auk,² now almost forgotten in the world by all except the ornithologists, is still remembered among the Penobscot as one of the legendary bird chiefs. While we may hesitate a moment in believing the strict identity of this now-extinct bird with the hero character in one of the creation tales, it nevertheless seems quite possible that the identity may be correctly assumed from certain traditional descriptive traits. The auk figures as the chief of a tribe which is visited by the chief deity of the Penobscot when his uncle desires to secure a wife. Auk's daughter is the girl selected, but before the suitor is accepted tests have to be undergone to prove his worth.³ One of them is the test of jumping. The chief deity, Gluskabe, gives his uncle power enabling him three times to jump over auk's wigwam. The uncle, however, becomes over-ambitious and in attempting to make the jump the fourth time falls through the smoke-hole of the wigwam into the fire beneath where he burns his back into a hard crust and becomes a turtle, the ancestor of the shelly tribe.

The seashore birds, the gulls and the terns, are separated

¹ (A. O. U. 119) Pen. *wagwânes* "old heel;" Mal. *agwuns*.

² (A. O. U. 33) Pen. *gellû*; Mal. *klu*; Mic. *kullû*.

³ For an interesting discussion of the test theme in America, see R. H. Lowie, *Journal of American Folk-lore*, vol. xxi, 1908.

in terminology only by the denotation of size.¹ Throughout the Wabanaki area, gulls have onomatopœic names, which the Indians render as *kāk*. The terns are "small gulls," the name being the same as the preceding with the diminutive termination. We do not hear so much about gulls in the mythology of the east, but they stand forth as weather prophets and curiously in the capacity of earth-hunter, after the deluge, which corresponds to the place of the dove in Biblical mythology. The great black-backed gull from Nova Scotia frequently appears in the Penobscot country. His name is the same as in the English.²

Mother-Cary's chicken or Leach's petrel³ is well known to the Indians of this region who frequently make protracted voyages in their frail canoes miles from the coast-line among the islands lying off the mouth of the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers. These little birds are correctly named from their habit of obtaining nourishment by scooping animal matter from the tops of waves as they patter over them in flight. Their English name petrel has evidently evolved from this appearance of walking on the surface of the water. The Penobscot name for them is "picking up grease (while skimming over the water)." For all of the preceding feathered tribes the Indians have great respect. None of them is killed or disturbed, because its flesh is not considered palatable except in times of famine.

The tribe of the ducks and geese is truly a great one in the life and belief of the northern Indians. The annual migration of this great family brings to them an abundance of food, in the securing of which intense activity and skill are required. Perhaps it is on account of the need of knowing the calls and cries of the ducks that we observe imitative names applied to the different kinds instead of the descriptive names which occur in European nomenclature. The black duck's cry

¹ (A. O. U. 51) Herring Gull, Pen. *kākcw*; Mal. *kiākcw*. (A. O. U. 70) Common Tern, Pen. *kiā'zis*; Mal. *kiākcwis*; St. Fr. *kā'kwis*.

² (A. O. U. 47) Pen. *kākcwme'kazēwipskanat*, "gull black-backed."

³ (A. O. U. 106) Pen. *manhī'bmēt*, "picking up grease."

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to Indian ears resounds as "*kwi-kwi*" whence its name, *kwi'kwi'messu*, "the creature (that cries) *kwi-kwi*."¹ The old squaw duck is *aha'wessu*. Its cry is thought to be *aha'wuli*. The element *aha* signifies "yes." So again we have the merganser in Penobscot, *wzi'kawe*,² another onomatopœic term. This word was taken over into English by Thoreau who in his fascinating journal written during a sojourn in the Maine woods frequently refers to the merganser as "Shicorway." I might venture to trace one more, an American place name, to the same Indian source. Chocorua, that superb mountain in New Hampshire, named from the unhappy Pennacook chief who was killed there, seems a possible relative to the above term. The wood duck, the beautiful feather mosaic of his family, seems not to have appealed much to the eyes of the Indians for the term "fresh water duck"³ applied to the bird, denotes a characteristic of its habits rather than its appearance. We have again the scoter duck, whose frequency near the ocean has earned it the name "salt water creature."⁴ Next the two toothsome cousins, the teals, appear under the Penobscot name "little mitten,"⁵ an endearing name to the Indian mind accounted for by the resemblance of the bird's figure to that article of comfort indispensable to both Indian and white man. The Canada goose and the brant goose are both embraced under a common term derived from the idea "white;"⁶ a term too old to lend itself to further explanation at present. The ducks and geese do not figure in folklore particularly as heroes; their rôle is the humble part of adjuncts to the play of action and fancy in the animal

¹ (A. O. U. 133) Pen. *kwi'kwi'messu*; Mal. *megezaweit mēdēhēssim* "black duck."

² (A. O. U. 129) Mal. *ksi'ke*.

³ (A. O. U. 144) Pen. *alantegwi'tessu*, "river, or fresh water, bird," Mal. *alantegwi'ess*.

⁴ (A. O. U. 163-5) Mal. *sobégwiess* "salt water, ocean, bird;" St. Fr. *sobagwi'tā*.

⁵ (A. O. U. 139-140) Mal. *mēldjēssēsīs*, "little mitten."

⁶ (A. O. U. 172, 173) Pen. *wāptegwe*; Mal. *wāptukew*; Mic. *mogelewite*, Brant, *sinemk* Canada Goose.

stories. As weather signs and omens, however, there seems no end to their function.

The family of waders has at its head one whose name occurs several times in the myths as an important hero. The great blue heron whose proper name is *kā'sko*,¹ derived from his cry, is a bird of stately indifference, who in one story, however, lent valuable aid to a pair of fleeing lovers who were being pursued by a she-witch. They arrive at a rushing river which they cannot cross. A heron is standing on the banks resting upon one leg. The lovers wisely flatter the stately bird for his beauty of neck and leg, and upon this leg then as upon a bridge they are enabled to cross the torrent which bars their flight. The pursuing she-witch ridicules the heron when she arrives on the scene and is allowed to cross on the leg too, but in the middle the leg is suddenly turned and the detractor of the heron's charms is thrown into the rapids and destroyed.

The great blue heron, the bird of decadence, his kingdom the swamps and lagoons of the intermediate ages, so eclipses the rest of his tribe that all the others are indiscriminately alluded to as "little *kā'sko*."² The woodcock from his favorite scene of operations has earned the name "grass bird,"³ while the stately *bittern* has been singled out by Indian name-givers of long ago as the "*old pounder*,"⁴ a name which any ornithologist or hunter would recognize as being exceedingly applicable to the mysterious creature whose voice, from the depth of the swamp, sounds like the chug of a pump-handle. The various lovers are not separated in Indian terminology. They are known collectively as "the long-legged birds,"⁵

¹ (A. O. U. 194) Pen. *kā'sko*, Mal. *kask°*. Casco Bay on the Maine Coast is said by the Indians to have been named because of the abundance of these birds there.

² All other herons appearing in the Penobscot country are simply *kā'skis* "little *kā'sko*."

³ (A. O. U. 228) Pen. *nek°wskikwahássis* "little grass bird;" Mal. *nek°skwikwéssis*.

⁴ (A. O. U. 190) Mal. *nok°ha'mnēs* "old pounder;" St. Fr. *pokhamenēs*.

⁵ (A. O. U. 231, 253, 255) Pen. *ktcidja°dja°wigā°dessu* "big long-legged bird;" St. Fr. *sasaso'*.

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while the sand-pipers, who have the habit of bobbing up and down while sprinting along the water courses, are grouped under the common "bobbing tail,"¹ rendered also among the English speaking people of the north as "teeter-tail."

There was a time when the forests of Maine abounded with wild pigeons. But the bird is not mentioned in Penobscot fable. In the name of the passenger pigeon, however, we encounter a term, upon which we can build somewhat in imagination. This term in Penobscot is *bles*,² with close variants in the neighboring eastern dialects. Its etymology can hardly be explained, but a related term occurs among all the other Algonkian tribes which is among them the generic term for "bird." Hence by analogy the eastern word for the passenger pigeon is simply, "the bird." To the natives it must have been an important game bird in days gone by.

We may wonder why the northern Indians did not apply this selective name to what really was "the bird," namely the wild turkey. An explanation, however, may be sought for in the knowledge that the northeastern limit of the noble fowl runs across southern Maine and so probably was not a familiar sight to the inhabitants of the Canadian zone. None of the older people even remembers seeing any native representatives of the species. So we have today only the survival of the name, *neheme*, which means "gobbling."³ Farther south in New England, where the wild turkey formerly abounded, however, we have the Narragansett name in identical form, a piece of evidence which seems to point to a former knowledge of the turkey when it was an inhabitant of southern Maine or when the Penobscot and their allies were resident in a more southern zone.

¹ (A. O. U. 235, 242, 256, 263) Pen. *nenemi'ktcis* "bobbing hind-parts."

² (A. O. U. 315) Pen. *bles*, Mal. *ples*, St. Fr. *pélaz*, Mic. *poli's*. Montagnais *ple'jo* specifies the partridge as does the related Ojibway *binéci* at times, though both imply simply a bird.

³ (A. O. U. 310) Pen. *ne'heme*, St. Fr. *nahama'*; Mal. *ne'p* (plural *ne' mi'ik*) Narragansett *neyhom*, (Roger Williams, Key Into the Language of America, R. I. Hist. Society Coll., Vol. .1, Prov. 1827, p. 85). The bird was exterminated at an early time in New England, according to historical accounts.

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The ruffed grouse, the smaller cousin of the turkey, is still an abundant feature of avian life in the shadowy evergreen forests of the north. If we demand that a bird name like a tale needs a plot if it is to please long and to please many, then we may feel satisfied with the following instance. The Indians are constant hunters of the birds, they love its flavor, and yet their name for it means literally, "the bad bird."¹ I was for some years at a loss to explain this case of misnaming until it was suggested by an old Indian naturalist that since its flesh tasted so good, there ought to be more meat on the bird; finally that the good bird was bad because it was never fat. The grouse is frequently the actor in vulgar fable. He figures as a faithless husband who supplies his family with meat from his thighs instead of obtaining it by the hunt. His wife finally punishes him when she discovers his erring ways and since then the bird's legs have had no meat on them. In another tale the grouse and the muskrat brag about the good flavor of their meat. But the grouse wins the argument by saying, that when he wades across a stream the people who drink the water below can taste the flavor of broth. I have heard Æsop's tale of the fox and the sour grapes repeated in Indian, the grouse taking the part of the bird. The spruce partridge is equally abundant in the same country. His lack of fear is proverbial in the north, though there are few places in Maine where the bird can be taken with a noose on the end of a pole as can actually be done in the more remote parts of Canada. To the Indians the spruce partridge is the bird that "goes branching off to the boughs in his flight," or "the ruffed up bird."²

There are four hawks in the country under observation but they are undifferentiated among the Indians. In one tribe of the area the name means "spring bird,"³ where it is

¹ (A. O. U. 300) Pen. *madji'tessu* "bad bird," Mal. *medjiéss*.

² (A. O. U. 298c) Pen. *pske' ga'dagi'te* "goes branching off to the trees;" Mal. *sa'se ge'dagiess* "ruffed up bird;" St. Fr., *pakesso'*.

³ (A. O. U. 332, 333, 337, 339) Pen., *awe'tes*; St. Fr., *segwanit'a'* "spring bird."

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also asserted that the hawk kills its prey by a blow from the sharp breast bone when it strikes its victim at the terminus of its descent from the air. The fish hawk¹ has, however, earned a separate appellation. Its name is "great fishing bird," a diagnostic name that is extremely well-deserved.

We now come to the mention of two noble creatures whose forms are occasionally seen swinging in the upper platform of the air, in these northern regions where rabbits, squirrels, and partridges fall victims to their keen beak and keener talons.

X The golden eagle and the bald eagle are known respectively as the joint kings of birds, the latter passing under the name of "whitehead." In a number of the more serious myths the eagle is mentioned in his regal part. He is probably the bird intended in the famous story, which relates how the principal deity of the Penobscot traveled to the north to find the cause of the tempestuous whirlwinds which were rending the surface of the earth, for the eagle's wings are the source of the four winds which issue from the cardinal points.

To the primitive Indian mind as well as to the mind of the early European, the family of the owls is one of deep portent and fable.

Five distinct specific names are given in these dialects to the five principal owls to be met with in the northern woods. Here is a case of almost complete ornithological classification. The long-eared owl² exists under a name which is supposed to convey the sound of its utterance, *dī'tagli'*. This owl is conceived as giving voice to the following phrase, "*dī'e tagli' halin-skul*" which is a corruption of what sounds to Penobscot ears like, "buckshot." The sonorous exclamations of owls lend themselves to interpretations in almost any language, an opportunity which certainly has not been overlooked by the superstitiously inclined natives of the north. In the barred owl, another imitative name is instanced, "*kokokeho*."³ The

¹ (A. O. U. 364) Pen. *izame'gwessu*, "great fishing bird."

² (A. O. U. 366) Pen. *dītAgli'*; Mal. *dītEgl*.

³ (A. O. U. 368) Pen. *kokhokhássu*; Mal. *kokokhas*.

snowy owl,¹ that beautiful spectre of the north, is regarded as a relative of the barred owl and is known as, "white kokhokeho." One of the actors in mythology is a youth named, "Snowy Owl," whose career furnishes one of the most active and well plotted romances which the Indian mind seems capable of inventing.

The screech owl is a common denizen of northern swamps and the stands of evergreen conifers. His name in all the dialects is derived from the same sound conception "*kamkamess*."² There seems to be no etymological value to this form, but the sound, itself, is possessed of another value which was much appreciated in the old days when war with the Iroquois ruled the land of the Wabanaki. The cry of the screech owl was used as the signal code for warriors hiding in ambush and it still is occasionally used in the same way by hunters who desire to signal one another without alarming the game they are trying to approach. To mock this owl, "as if he were the sacred bird of Minerva forbid the mockery of his dismal ominous cries," is believed to bring on misfortune. For the old people insist on the belief that the screech owl will burn anyone who mocks him by causing his campfire to ignite his clothing or camp effects. Probably the ultimate origin of the warning against imitating owl's cries lies in the fact that the cries serve as signals among warriors and hunters.

The diminutive saw-whet owl, whose diurnal retreat is in the depth of the high balsam groves, seems to share some of the beliefs connected with the preceding bird. Its name is an attempt to reproduce the sounds it utters, "*azaga'te*."³

Of the kingfisher, whose native name means "diver for fish,"⁴

¹ (A. O. U. 376) Pen. *wambikokhokhássu*.

² (A. O. U. 373) Pen. *kamkámessu*; Mal. *kāpkāmēss*. Nuttal, Ornithology, Ed. by M. Chamberlain, Boston, 1897, p. 73, says "cheepomess," the bird of death is Richardson's owl and its sound is a sign of death.

³ (A. O. U. 372) Pen. *azaga'te*; Mal. *azga'te*.

⁴ (A. O. U. 390) Pen. *kaskama'nessu*, "diver for fish;" Mal. *kaskaA'mnis*; St. Fr. *teskwadadás*.

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several stories are related, though none is comparable in poetic fancy to Ovid's immortal halcyon tale. In all of them this active bird stands forth signalized by his prowess in diving. There is one tale resembling Æsop's Fable of the "Dining of the Fox and the Stork." Here the actors are the kingfisher and the raccoon. The kingfisher invites the raccoon to dine with him. He obtains fish for dinner by his wonderful diving and spearing. In return the raccoon invites the kingfisher to dine with him the day after. He plunges into the stream as the kingfisher did, and instead of spearing fish he is carried off into the whirlpool and drowns. His guest has to revive him and provide the fish for dinner for his undone host. This type of story represents one which produces a deep appeal to the Indian sense of humor; we may call it the type "tables turned on the host" or "the bungling host." The same motive is repeated in the anecdote of the pileated woodpecker who provides a meal for his guest by picking worms from a dead stump. When they are placed before the guest, they are transformed into luscious roast beavers. When the guest, who again is a raccoon, tries as before to produce a meal in the way he had seen his host do, and ties a bone to his nose, he only succeeds in puncturing his skull in his efforts to drill into the stump, and the woodpecker has to come to the rescue and bring him back to life.

This giant of the woodpecker tribe possesses a name, *meme*,¹ which must be an ancient one among the northern Algonkians, for it is the only name applied among all the northern tribes to the same species of bird throughout. Longfellow has popularized the term in his *Hiawatha*.

The tribes of the smaller woodpeckers abundantly replenish the burnt areas in the forests of the north. The different species, however, are not recognized in the nomenclature of the Indians, who call them collectively "tree birds," or by a name which means "striking wood," or "pick wood," terms which express the same idea brought out both in the English and

¹ (A. O. U. 405) Pen. *mé'me*; St. Fr. *mama*; Mal. *Amkwátkwat*, "great red head;" Ojibwa, *mé'me*.

the French names for the members of this family.¹ The flicker is separated from the common group by a name which is either an imitation of his call or else derived from an archaic term not now capable of explanation, which contains the root "expert."² The smaller cousins of the "pick wood" family, those delightful drab colored climbers, the nuthatches, are designated by the apt and pretty term "going upside down or right side up,"³ a name which needs no further explanation to those who have watched their happy antics. Still another name is "worm pickers" and, finally, we have a clerical analogy in the name "little priest," a modern name derived from the sober mantle of color which both representatives of the local nuthatches carry as a distinguishing mark.

We now come with impatient interest to the recording of some observations on two birds which have challenged interest in the minds of men all over the world; the whip-poor-will⁴ and the nighthawk. There seems to be a touching quality in the notes of the first of these dusk-fliers which calls forth a responsive strain in the mind of the hearer, especially when the weird sentence-like utterance of the whip-poor-will sounds forth in the solitary recesses of the wilderness where all nature is silent. What sounds to our ears like "whip-poor-will" comes to northern Indian senses with the value "wipolessu." Like us the natives assign a meaning to the term, one however, which, on account of its obscenity is unfortunately barred from further discussion. Incidentally, I have often wondered why the Canadian French, who have associated so closely with the Indians for so long and whose superstitious fancy is by no means undeveloped, should have missed the chance of invent-

¹ (A. O. U. 406, 393, 394) Pen. *aba'sessu*, "tree bird;" and *pagama'kwe* "striking wood;" St. Fr. *onbássas*; Mal. *paga'kwaha* "pick wood."

² (A. O. U. 412) Pen. *ta'wa'lotc*.

³ (A. O. U. 727, 728) Pen. *djiga'lauda'weptus*; Mal. *waha'ntussis-kedjik* "worm pickers."

⁴ (A. O. U. 417) Pen. *wipo'lessu*; Mal. *wi'pholes*; St. Fr. *pa'poles*, Mic. *wikuilē'tc*. Nuttall, op. cit. p. 468, gives wecoalis as the Delaware Indian name.

ing a phrase-meaning for the call of this bird. Instead they employ the old French name engoulevent, "gulp the wind,"¹ a name likewise independent of the Plinian name Caprimulgus, "goat sucker," which is in common use for the European representative of the family. Another southern member of this vociferous family of birds has bespoken for himself the name "Chuck Will's widow," a name which carries the tradition of speech faculty from one end of the group to the other.

The nighthawk, like the whip-poor-will, has provided himself in Penobscot with his own name, *pesk*.²

These volatile beings, the swallows, whose forms in such countless numbers fill the ample vault of the sky in the north country in summer, are collectively known as "thunder birds," arising from the belief that they serve the thunder as aerial messengers. The name "rain bird" has also become attached to them, for the Indians regard them as the fore-runners of the storm. These names include all five northern swallows,³ including the chimney swift, except the bank swallow,⁴ which has a special name meaning "he has a burrow." The latter deserve special recognition, the Indians say, on account of their colonizing habit. This impels them to excavate their nest burrows in great companies where they honeycomb the high banks of streams in places whence they issue forth towards evening in swarms of thousands, combing the air in their onslaughts upon the assembled multitudes of mosquitoes infesting the sylvan wilderness of the north. The swallows, in short, are truly the birds of summer. They always remind the northern Indian of the story which relates of a time when the world had neither summer nor swallows; when winter's ice and snow were unbroken by the genial period which has been ushered in since the retreat of the glacial age.

¹ "il engoule le vent, (il vole le bec ouvert)."

² (A. O. U. 420) Pen. *pesk^w*; Mal. *piktiskwe'ss*. The French Canadians call it *popetue'* for the same reason.

³ (A. O. U. 423, 612, 613, 614) Pen. *bedagi'tessis* "little thunder bird," St. Fr. *sa'ngloni'tassis* "little rain bird," Mal. *ebe'sskedjis*; Mic. *pugwalic*.

⁴ (A. O. U. 616) Mal. *elema'go'ket*, "has a hole;" St. Fr. *pne'gogitassis*.

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Another feathered jewel appearing in the north with the glad return of the period of warmth, and one which symbolizes to the Indian eye the floral awakening of nature, is the humming bird, whose Penobscot name *anitâssis*, "the hoverer,"¹ contains the idea of endearment. It is frequently adopted as a personal name for little girls whose tender ways appeal to their fond parents as the humming bird appeals to the flowers and blossoms upon which it depends for life.

In the case of the king bird we have the same characteristic manner of arrogance noted in the name given by both the Indians and the English. He is the "belittler of others," "the scorner."² As long ago as the time of Roger Williams the bird was noted among the Narragansett Indians by the name *Sachim* "chief," because of its prince-like courage and command over greater birds.

The jays, those clarion voiced patrolmen of the forest are enriched by many beliefs and ideas. Neither his dashing form nor his blue dress has earned the blue jay his Indian names. It is his voice. Where the English in the early days heard the European bird say, "jay;" the Frenchman heard "pie," but the Penobscot Indian hears "*didias*."³

The blue jay has traits of gallantry in Penobscot mythology. He befriended the helpless orphan in several tales and enabled him to become a hero. Nor do the Indians feel the dislike for him that white hunters do on account of his noisy alarm sounded upon first sight of the still-hunter. Probably no bird except the crow is more unpopular among white people in the American woods. The white hunter takes a shot at him to rid the trail of a noisy tatter, while in the civilized region the white ornithologist is undecided on the question of the bird's status in nature economy. To risk a shot, however, at the blue jay the Penobscot believes will bring bad luck to

¹ (A. O. U. 628) Mal. *yalame'ssit* "hoverer;" St. Fr. *nanatâssis*.

To the French in Canada this is Oiseau-Mouche, "Bird-Fly."

² (A. O. U. 444) Pen. *mesa'ndjessu*; Mal. *messendjess*. The French in Canada use an imitation the kingbird's voice, "tiritiri" for its name.

³ (A. O. U. 477) Mal. *titias*; St. Fr. *tidessô*; Mic. *tilis*.

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his gun. So instead of maligning the bird as an alarmist, he uses him as a spy on the game and circumvents the difficulty by using more caution in approaching the game which has been so betrayed.

The Canada jay, known generally throughout the north as whiskey-jack, is a bird interesting not only to the ornithologist but to the voyager whose journey leads him into the northern forests for instruction as well as pleasure. This bird has gained a reputation as a camp robber, a thief, a meat stealer—all on account of his fearlessness toward man and his consuming appetite in a land where the hunger of no carnivorous bird can ever be satisfied. The whiskey-jack, as we may call him, is known among the Indians south of the St. Lawrence as the "covetous, grabbing bird," as well as by another equally common name, the "offal bird."¹ The appropriateness of the first name is evident, but in the second the only suggestion comes from the fact that the bird is despised by the woodsmen on account of its fondness for camp offal. Its cunning and greed seem to be outstanding traits. Among the Indians north of the St. Lawrence, however, the name *wiskedjak*, from which the English name whiskey-jack has been derived, is the common term applied to the Canada jay from Labrador to the Rockies. A close association has developed between the bird and the hero-trickster of northern mythology, whose name in various dialects is a cognate of *wiskedjak*. Dr. Sapir has called attention to the occurrence of a curious analogy in the history of the French word *renard*, "fox." "This word is not of native Romance stock but is merely a French application of the favorite mediæval trickster Reynard, identified in folk-lore with the fox. The term itself is of Germanic origin and appears in many different forms. Among them are the modern German name Reinhart, and the Dutch and Flemish Reinecke or Reinke."²

It is unfortunate, however, from the point of view of the ornithologist that the whiskey-jack's fondness for the

¹ (A. O. U. 484) Pen. *keskezégwessu*, and *midjigáni-kessu*.

² *The Ottawa Naturalist*, Vol. 32, No. 6, 1918, p. 116.

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society of man is requited with cruelty. The Indian boys persecute the bold bird with their bows and arrows. It seems a natural archery target for the young hunters. But the white woodsman has refined the practice of cruelty to its extreme. It is no uncommon thing for the men of the lumber camps to bait a pole with a piece of meat and balance it over a log. When the whiskey-jack alights on the meat to tear a piece off, the tormentor strikes the other end of the pole a blow with a club, driving the bird stunned and wounded into the air. The helpless victim is then picked up, plucked bare of feathers and turned loose to enjoy the cold of an arctic winter shorn of his warm plumage.

Interest in the crow can never lag as long as the bird himself is in sight to stir it. When he is out of sight, then imagination supplies the ideas. In various tribal mythologies the crow is believed to have had his color changed from white to black as a punishment for some misdeed.

An Islamic tale relates how the crow was cursed by Mohammed and turned black for betraying the prophet's hiding place by an ill-timed caw. In one of the most ancient Vedas the bird was hurled down through the stories of heaven for carrying abroad the secrets of the gods. The "sullen black incontinent" of the crow in Roman mythology grew out of an act of Æsculapius who changed its color from white as a sign of mourning for his mother, the nymph Coronis.

In America there are several instances where myth explains a similar color transformation. The Ojibwa genesis presents a white crow as the messenger sent out, after the deluge, to seek for signs of land. The white bird is told not to eat before returning with his report. He disobeys and becomes black out of punishment. To the Indians throughout America the crow is involved with religious feeling. Among the Penobscot he is the bringer of the first corn to the human race. He is the messenger of the mythical culture-hero, and again his antagonist when the hero tries to escape from a pursuing Cyclops. The crow is an actor of many parts in Algonkian. He is assigned a profound intelligence which he no doubt deserves.

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and is believed to observe a form of social control out of which arise the assemblies and councils which have been so often reported to take place in the crow kingdom. The French Canadian settlers call these gatherings "noces de corneilles," "crow weddings" by an inferior process of thought. In the crow's name we behold another universal resemblance in sound perception; classical *corax* and *corvus*; English *crow* and its cognates as well as all the Indian names in the area we are considering, such as *mkásEs*, *kágos*, reproduce the corvine sonant.¹ Yet there has been a sound convergence as well for the term also is a relative of that for "black."

That sable monster, the raven, with his deep voice, has called forth an Indian name which, like that of the crow, is onomatopœic, *gagago*.² He often shares in Indian mythology the scene of action with the crow.

The bobolink bears a descriptive name, "white-back" while in one of the other eastern dialects it is the "pond black-bird."³ That gallant spring songster, the red-winged black-bird which the French have so appropriately denoted "l'officier" for possessing his red epaulets, is, however, among the Penobscot named for his voice, "*tcEgwelesk*."⁴ The bronzed grackle which annually arrives from the west in waves which settle down all over northern New England and Canada is called by the Indians "fearsome bird."⁵ This name seems correctly applied to the grackle which in the north is quite shy and restless near man. The catbird when referred at all to is called by the same name, though it is rarely seen in the forests of northern Maine.

We now come to record native observations on that interesting group, the finches, large numbers of which breed in the

¹ (A. O. U. 488) Pen. *mkásEs* "black-old;" Mal. *káka'gos*; St. Fr. *mkázas*, Mic. *kakagutc*.

² (A. O. U. 486) Pen. *ktci gágago* "big gagago;" St. Fr. *ktcimkásas* "big crow."

³ (A. O. U. 494) Pen. *waⁿ bipskwana'sit*; St. Fr. *nēbesitcólēske* "pond blackbird."

⁴ (A. O. U. 498).

⁵ (A. O. U. 511b and 704) Pen. *djibai-~~t~~essu*; Mal. *tcEgweles'ske*.

north, enlivening the woods with their song. The goldfinch appeals to the Indians as the "cunning, shy bird,"¹ while another name, "the yellow bird," is applied to him as well as to the yellow warbler. The chipping sparrow and his allies have earned a name which indicates their fondness for man's proximity, "little garden bird."² These are agrarian creatures who evidently from early times have continued showing their fondness for the cleared spaces near Indian camps. The song sparrow, to my mind, possesses the prettiest sounding name that we meet with in northern Indian bird names, "*sulsulsui*."³ This is the sound representation of what the friendly song sparrow calls forth to man in the early days of spring. Though many ornithologists have tried to render the tuneful lay of the song sparrow into word form, it can hardly be said that enough agreement exists among the forms given to make any of them more worthy of consideration than the others. There seems to be some attempt to distinguish between the song sparrow and the sweet-voiced white-throated sparrow whose tender whistle resounds so frequently from the evergreen thickets everywhere in the Canadian zone. The latter when distinctly referred to seems to be designated as the "big chickadee,"⁴ although in the nomenclature of most of the Indians the two birds are confounded.

Our winter friends, the snowflake and the snowbird or junco, have challenged enough attention from the northern natives to receive appropriate names. The former appears as "little white goose"⁵ from the resemblance of this small bird to the Canada goose, a resemblance which lies mostly in the similarity of breast color. The junco, met with everywhere in the forests, is generally a more or less solitary bird in the summer. Two

¹ (A. O. U. 529) Pen. *si'tewis*; Mal. *wizawie'ssis* (also A. O. U. 652a).

² (A. O. U. 540, 581, 585) Pen. *ki'kanitessis*; Mal. *ki'kanie'ssis*.

³ (A. O. U. 581) Mal. *sulsulsu'li*; St. Fr. *kaskaldja's*.

⁴ (A. O. U. 558) Pen. *ktcigigita'ssis*. Possibly the Malecite name of the preceding belongs properly to this species.

⁵ (A. O. U. 534) Pen. and Mal. *waⁿbigita'k^wsis*; Mal. also *waste'wiessis*, little snow bird.

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composite names are applied to this bird but they do not lend themselves to explanation except in respect to one element which seems to refer to "bubbling,"¹ or "bouncing."

The prettiest concept of all is expressed in the Penobscot name for the redstart.² It is called *skwudés* "little fire" or "flamelet." A rather remarkable coincidence is presented in the fact that the same beautiful bird has received from the natives of Cuba the name "el candelita," the "little candle," "who flashes his brilliant salmon flame and black feathers." The habit of spasmodically displaying its flashing brilliancy has impressed the Indians of the north as well as the natives of Cuba in the same way that the oriole did Holmes, "floating like a flake of fire."

RED

- The very applicable Cuban name seems to have been first introduced into bird literature by Neltje Blanchan in one of her books and this interesting note together with her remark on the name Mariposas "butterflies," applied in Cuba to the warblers in general, has been repeated in the pages of several bird books without credit to the source. Such attractive data, however, as the poetry of names and their allegories might well be promulgated even if the pioneers of knowledge are ignored. We need not hesitate to complain against the indifference of even most of our best bird essayists in this respect.

There is, however, one observation which truth compels me to make as disagreeable as the contemplation of it is. Coming from out the past there is a cruel tradition. When, near the savage camp a bird mounted upon some swaying twig and poured forth his melody it was regarded as an omen of sickness and death. Yet if the happy creature could be killed or wounded the curse would be annulled. The feeble beak was torn apart and the throat so lately palpitating with joyous song, was spat into, *kedAzi'tA'nona* "he is causing sickness and death," muttered the avenger. Children too, were often applauded for their attacks upon captive birds and animals, those which had fallen victims to their ready bows and arrows.

¹ (A. O. U. 567) Pen. *abesska'djEssis*; Mal. *po'keZna'wessis*.

² (A. O. U. 687) Pen. and Mal. *skwudés*.

They were trained by this example of cruelty how to treat their human foes in the battles of manhood. And yet with mediæval hospitality children were taught to protect the bird guest that ventured to enter the camp door. The host then became the protector in the belief that the bird was a spirit visitor and the bringer of good fortune. If harm should befall the creature the sacrilege would be avenged by the bird's outraged kin and game animals would never allow the hunter to approach.

Among the few name similes that we encounter in a review of Indian bird names in the north, that of the cedar-bird, or cedar-waxwing, affords an interesting case of analogy. To many peoples in the New World the appearance of the cedar-bird has called forth the same response, providing for it a name derived from the prominence of its crest or topknot. The northern Indians know the cedar-bird as "Mohawk hair-cut"¹ from the resemblance of the bird's crest to the ancient Mohawk style of "roaching" the hair by shaving off all but the dorsal crest. This method of hair dressing contrasted greatly with that of the Algonkian tribes who ordinarily allowed the hair to grow long or braided it. Like the Turks in Asia the Mohawks were consequently known as the warriors who wore the hair-crest and so the cedar-bird has come to be regarded as a reminder of the age of warfare with the Iroquois. We find appellations based upon the topknot current among the Canadian French who call the bird Récollet, and in the south where the name Crown Bird was applied by English observers who noticed the peculiarity as the Indians did.²

The great family of northern warblers receives little attention from Indian observers. It constitutes the group of denizens of the leafy vasts which the natives know so well but which do not challenge special attention. They pass

¹ (A. O. U. 619) Pen. *megwaimo'*suma'sit; Mal. *megwi'muzma'sit*.

² Still more information of interest concerning bird names is given by Dr. Spencer Trotter in an article entitled "An Inquiry into the History of the Current English Names of North American Birds," *The Auk*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1909, page 358.

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under the generic name "small birds."¹ Only one, the black and white warbler has called forth separate mention and he, too is confounded with the nuthatches in the name "little priest,"² bestowed on account of his light and drab cloak.

As one travels in the shades of the northern forests he soon learns to expect the company of the vocal and joyous chickadee whose eyes are ever watchful for the woodsman's campfire smoke telling him that near by is man, and that refuse from the camp meal may be had before long. The friendly habit of the chickadee has appealed to the imagination of Indian myth makers, for he appears in narrative as the helper of the culture-hero at the moment when the giant monster, White Bear, was about to overcome him. The Indian Achilles had expended all but one arrow in a futile attempt to pierce the heart of the monster, when the chickadee alighted upon his shoulder and whispered in his ear that the heart of the great White Bear really lay in his heel. The hero shot his last arrow at White Bear's heel and killed him, ridding the world of the monster which had been preying on mankind. The chickadee continues to chant his little lay which says "*ktcigigil ássis*."³ His plaintive and friendly voice awakens in the mind of the traveling hunter the truth of the native belief in the friendly and helpful nature of this sweet bird.

The three thrushes of Maine are known by the same name, "bird of evening," "evening caller."⁴ Undoubtedly that most incomparable singer, the hermit thrush with his clarinetist voice is meant, for this is the most noteworthy among the birds of the Penobscot country, the one that im-

¹ Pen. *si'psis* denotes in general any small insignificant birds. This is the independent substantive. In composition, however, a secondary, inseparable element is required, Pen.—*tessu* (—*tessis*, dimin.) Mal.—*ess* (—*essis*, dimin.).

² (A. O. U. 636) Pen. *patlias*, "priest" from Eng. "father."

³ (A. O. U. 735) Pen. and Mal.

⁴ (A. O. U. 755, 756, 759b) Pen. *alangwe'wëdëm* "evening caller;" St. Fr. *wlo'ngwi'tas*, "evening bird." The St. Francis Abenaki apply this name evidently to the cuckoo which in the north frequently utters his call at night.

presses itself most strongly on the attention of the woodsman whether he be white or Indian. No one who travels in the country of the northern Indians fails to experience the feelings of calm and peace with the world which are stirred when the hermit's seraphic music fills the etherial sky.

Among the birds that spring invites to the northern climates, one of the most common and conspicuous is the robin.¹ I have seen one on a snowy bald as early as the 16th of April. In Canada the "red breasted thrush" of both English and French is well known for the legend of the cross which all the poets except George Sand have overlooked. Lemoine traces the fable back to the Bretons. The European belief that the red breast is the agent of supernatural power and the carrier of good messages from spirits, so nicely related by Toussenel, is not carried over particularly to the American robin although the bird is greatly loved by the settlers in the Laurentian forests. As far north as one goes in the timber country he will meet the robin, though not in numbers. Now and then the call note so familiar to the inhabitant of warmer climates will be heard amid the spruce and fir growths of the Canadian zone to remind him of the distant lilac bushes, lawns and maple trees that form so conspicuous a feature of his home landscape. The bird's alarm call has earned him the names, *gwicgwic*, and *wi'kwu'skessu*, and the latter has been modified by a rationalizing tendency, into the term which can be translated as "he draws his wings close when flying."

A group of interesting birds of whom, however, nothing more can be given from the Indian point of view than their names, includes, the bluebird, called "blue-tinted,"² the pine grosbeak, "bough-picker,"³ the crossbill, "crooked-nosed bough-picker," and⁴ the linnet and the purple finch which are

¹ (A. O. U. 761) Pen. *wi'kwu'skessu* "draws his wings close together, when flying;" St. Fr. *kwi'kweskás*; Mal. *ankwi'bzhess*. The Ojibwa of Ontario have the name *gwicgwic*, a derivation of the bird's alarm note. I believe that all these forms are etymologically related.

² (A. O. U. 766) Pen. *ka'kase'kwatsil*.

³ (A. O. U. 515) Mal. *amunhaduk*.

⁴ (A. O. U. 521) Mal. *pemskwi'gnat amunháduk*.

ranked together under the name "red one."¹ Lastly, and to a certain extent, least, the winter wren is recognized under the name "little under-hiding bird"² from his habit of darting under piles of brush.

It has become apparent that in all the northeastern Algonkian dialects, avian forms are definitely classified in their proper grouping under the term *sips*, "bird (in general)" undoubtedly of onomatopœic origin. The generic term, however, includes one unauthorized member, the bat, in Indian fable the modern survivor of the "toothed birds of North America." All the northern Indians classify this mammal with the birds, applying to him different forms of the term meaning "fur-hide bird."³ According to the native theory of evolution, human beings of the mythical age metamorphosed back into the lower forms of life as often as they did forward from animal to human form. There is a tale of the primeval transformation. Two old women, became changed into bats; two blind widowed comrades, who were continually fighting with each other, using for the purpose their sharpened elbow bones which, as the natives point out, still survive in the bat in the shape of the clawed digit.

Aside from the birds of reality, whose recitation has until now engaged our attention, there exist those winged creatures of fancy, the actors in myth and legend unlike anything revealed to modern mortal eye. They are, however, none the less real to the credulous natives of the sub-Arctic regions in whose wild fastnesses and gloomy recesses in summer, and over whose snowy vasts in winter prowl the forms of creatures born of imagination affected by solitude, cold, hunger and fear. Some of these beings assume avian shapes. There is weird

¹ (A. O. U. 528, 517) Mal. *me^ckwí'git*. The identity of birds and names is very uncertain in these cases.

² (A. O. U. 722) Pen. *alam^tabikessis*.

³ Pen. and Mal. *medégeni^tessu*. A similar difficulty, even worse handled from the point of view of observation, seems to have confronted the Chinese in classifying the flying squirrel which by them is likewise included among the birds. (Cf. S. W. Williams, *The Middle Kingdom*, New York, 1904, Vol. I, p. 327.)

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Pemule, a creature with paddles in the form of bull-roarers for wings and whose voice is like a high whistle. He comes buzzing his way every seven years from the east, coursing past the zenith to disappear on the western horizon. He utters one note when he rises from the eastern horizon, another at the zenith, and another at the point of sunset. If the people in any way desire help of Pemule they are to build a fire so that the smoke will rise at noontime and signal him to descend when he arrives and utters his cry at the zenith. Whereupon Pemule, bird, insect or whatever he is, will, it is believed, descend and free the people from their oppressing troubles.¹

The great compelling world winds are believed to be maintained by the flapping of the wings of the monster bird which resides perched upon a high peak near the northern edge of the world. Once in the mythical age of transformation the tempest raised by the wind bird waxed unbearable to life. The tearing currents impelled by his flapping winds uprooted forests and turned the surface of the sea into driving spray. It then became necessary for the legendary culture-hero to betray the bird monster into his hands and partially disable him to prevent the recurrence of his manifestation of power. Versions of this poetical fancy are recorded in great detail and with complex by-plays from the Ojibwa of western Ontario through to the Wabanaki on the Atlantic coast. The epic, on the whole, affords an example of one of the finest productions of Algonkian literary composition.

Another bird known as the "wampum bird" appears in story. The creature was the pet of the mythical hero. On alternate mornings this "goose that laid the golden egg," as it were, rustled its feathers and shook down a shower of white and black wampum beads for its master.

We may now at the last lend ourselves to the enjoyment of

¹ Pemule literally means "coming flying and paddling" in Penobscot, St. Fr. *Pamolá*. The creature moves through the air by twirling a bull-roarer in each hand like a propeller. Bull-roarers are of wide distribution in the primitive world from Australia to the American Indians. They are generally conceived as reproducing the voices of spirits.

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a further discovery in the Indian natural history of birds. It is the belief, general among the Canadian tribes, that the small birds arriving in the north with the spring tide of migration ride upon the backs of wild geese or loons, and return to the south by the same accommodating means in the fall. This curious belief is of considerable ornithological interest, in view of its remote possibility of partial truth. The belief finds a wide distribution in both the old world and the new. It is reported, as we shall mention in a moment, from a number of European sources and has recently attracted my attention among the Algonkian tribes from Newfoundland westward through Ontario. And the information coming from published sources carries it through almost to the Rockies. Several naturalists of modern as well as ancient times have indicated a certain credulity toward the fable. The Indians are assured of its truth, but their assurance in this case is about the same as their certainty of the truth of the story that the wonga-wonga bird provisions herself by laying half a dozen eggs and eating them. There are those among the Penobscot and Malecite who claim to have seen the small birds alight from the backs of geese when about to settle upon the surface of a lake to rest after a long flight. The Micmac of Nova Scotia also relate the same thing, adding that the Canada goose brings the robin from the south, that the birds ride beneath the wing-pits; that the geese also bring the flies of summer tucked beneath their plumage.¹ For all stories of this sort the Indians can point to actual hunters who have with their own eyes seen the thing performed. From one of the articles to be quoted in a moment we learn that the Cree Indians at Moose and York Factories, and the Athabascans from the Great Slave Lakes to the Mackenzie river tell the same stories.

European naturalists have not been far behind the aborigines in their profession of faith in this fable. Dr. George Bird Grinnell in a recent publication says, "A great many years ago

¹ Similarly the salmon are thought to bring the alewives and minnows, leading them from the sea and sheltering them by their fins.

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Dr. J. C. Merrill published in an ornithological journal an account of the Cranesback, a small bird with short bill and rounded wings which the Crow Indians had told him were carried on the backs of the sandhill cranes in their migration. Dr. Merrill did not see this small bird yet from the description given by the Crows, conjectured that it might be the pied-billed grebe." Dr. Grinnell goes on by saying, "No doubt, however, it is the Carolina rail which the Blackfoot Indians (of Montana) say the cranes transport on their backs north and south."¹ Dr. Grinnell appears to believe this item of Indian ornithology. He is in good company in the matter for Buffon² (1801) stated that the corncrake migrated to the south on the back of the crane, and Pallas, who traveled in Russia in 1793, repeated a similar statement. Now we also have an interesting article by a well-known British naturalist, Dr. J. E. Harting, who wrote, in *Forest and Stream* in 1888,³ an interesting essay bringing together a number of references bearing upon the truth of the thing attested to by witnesses of several nationalities during their travels in Europe, Asia, Africa and America.⁴

"At a recent meeting of the Linnean Society, Dr. John Rae, the well known Arctic traveler, read a paper relating to the birds and mammals of the Hudson's Bay Territories, and in the course of his remarks referred to the assertion of the Cree Indians, both at Moose and York Factory, that a small passerine bird, which was pointed out to him, but the name of which he has forgotten, habitually avails itself of the Canada goose when migrating to get a lift in the same direction, they having frequently seen it fly off from a goose when shot, or shot at, on the wing. All the coast Indians of Hudson's Bay, says Dr. Rae, devote a month or more every spring to shooting wildfowl (chiefly geese), the birds killed forming their entire food for the time. As soon as the geese begin to arrive, the Indian constructs a concealment of willows and grass, usually near a pool

¹ Bulletin of the American Game Protective Association, New York, Vol. 6, No. 1, Feb. 1, 1917, p. 10.

² *Histoire Naturelle* etc., Oiseaux. VIII, p. 150, and Pallas, *Zoogr.*

³ *Forest and Stream*, Apr. 26, 1888, The Cranesback, quoting in full an article in *London Field* by J. E. Harting.

⁴ I am indebted to Mr. B. H. Swales of the National Museum for tracing this matter for me and securing the issue containing the article.

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of open water, at the edge of which he sets up decoys. When geese are seen approaching, usually flying at a great height, the Indian imitates their call, and the geese, on seeing the decoys, circle round, gradually coming lower down until within shot, when they are fired at. It is from these high flying geese that the small birds are seen to come. If the geese are flying low it is a pretty sure indication that they have already rested on the ground, somewhere near, after their long flight, when of course their tiny passengers would have alighted. The Indians on the shores of Athabasca and Great Slave Lakes—both great resorts of wild geese—and those living on the Mackenzie River, more than 1,000 miles to the northwest of Moose Factory, tell the same story, and from the positive statements which were made to him on the subject Dr. Rae saw no reason to doubt the assertion. So far as he could ascertain, the Canada goose is the only species in North America which thus acts the part of a locomotive, and conveys small passengers from place to place; but in Europe and Africa the common crane and the stork have on every respectable authority been credited with performing a similar friendly office.

"Dr. Lennep, in his 'Bible Customs in Bible Lands,' refers to the many small birds which find their way from Palestine into Arabia and Egypt on the backs of cranes, over lofty mountains and sea, which without such aid it would be difficult to cross. In the autumn flocks of cranes are seen coming from the north with the first cold blast from that quarter, flying low, and uttering peculiar cries as they circle over the cultivated plains. Little birds of different species may then be seen flying up to them, while the twittering of those already comfortably settled upon their backs may be distinctly heard. On their return in spring they fly high, perhaps considering that their little passengers can easily find their way down to the earth.

"In some instances, however, the small birds have been seen to come off the backs of the larger ones, just as the latter were about to alight. An American visitor to the Island of Crete in the autumn of 1878, as related by Professor Claypole, of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio (*Nature*, Feb. 24, 1881) satisfied himself that wagtails and other small birds cross over from Europe on their southward migration on the backs of cranes; and although on first hearing the statements made, he was extremely incredulous, he afterward, on one occasion, had ocular demonstration of the fact. A fisherman in his presence discharging his flint-lock at a flock of passing cranes, he saw three small birds rise up from among them, and disappear.

"A German author, Adolf Ebeling, writing in the *Gartenlaube*, asserts that he found it currently believed at Cairo that wagtails and other small birds cross from Europe to Nubia and Abyssinia on the backs of storks and cranes, and details the result of conversations which he had with several independent witnesses, all testifying to the same thing. He then

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proceeds: 'At supper, in the Hotel du Nil, I related the curious story to all present, but, naturally enough, found only unbelieving ears. The only one who did not laugh was the Privy-councillor von Heuglin, the famous African traveler, and, excepting Brehm, the most celebrated authority of our time on the birds of Africa.' On asking his opinion, he remarked, 'Let others laugh, they know nothing about it. I do not laugh, for the thing is well known to me. I should have made mention of it in my work, if I had had any personal proof to justify it. I consider the case probable, though I cannot give any warrant for it.' 'My discovery, if I may so call it (continues Herr Ebeling) I would have kept to myself, even after Heuglin had thus expressed himself, had I not since discovered a new authority for it. In the second edition of Dr. Petermann's great book of travels I find the following: 'Prof. Roth, of Munich, related to me, in Jerusalem, that the well-known Swedish traveler, Hedenborg, made an interesting observation on the island of Rhodes, where he was staying. In the autumn, when the storks came in flocks over the sea to Rhodes, he often heard the notes of small birds, without being able to see them; but on one occasion he observed a party of storks just as they alighted, and saw several small birds come off their backs, having been thus evidently transported by them across the sea.'

"In the face of such testimony, then, as that above mentioned, and the admission of his belief in the story by so experienced an ornithologist as Heuglin, the conclusion seems inevitable that there must be some truth in it, and it has received some confirmation from a singular observation since made in England. Mr. T. H. Nelson, of Redcar, writing to the *Zoölogist* for February, 1882 (p. 73), reports an occurrence related to him by an eye witness, Mr. Wilson, the foreman on the South Gare Breakwater, at the mouth of the Tees, which bears directly on the question at issue.

"On the morning of Oct. 16, fine and cold, wind northerly, Wilson was at the end of the Gare, when he saw a 'woodcock owl' (short-eared owl) 'come flopping across the sea.' As it came nearer he saw something between its shoulders, and wondered what it could be. The owl came and lit on the gearing within 10 yd. of where he was standing, and directly it came down a little bird dropped off its back and flew along the Gare. He signalled for a gun, but the owl saw him move, and flew off. He followed the small bird, however, and secured it, and on taking it to the local bird-stuffer for preservation, learned that it was a golden-crested wren. To see its irregular, and apparently weak, flight in passing through the air on a stormy day, it would never be supposed that so tiny a creature as the golden-crested wren would attempt to cross the sea, or would succeed in doing so if it tried. But that it travels to and from the Continent in spring and autumn is a fact which has been well ascertained by many competent observers. On the coasts of Yorkshire and Lincoln-

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shire, says Mr. Cordeaux, the autumnal migration of the gold crest is as well known as that of the woodcock, and from its usually arriving just before that species, it is known as the 'woodcock pilot.' The North Sea fishermen assert that these little birds often alight on their boats, an in foggy weather perish by hundreds. The same thing has been observed by Mr. E. T. Booth off the coast of Norfolk. There is, then, nothing so improbable as might at first sight appear in a gold-crest crossing the North Sea and alighting tired on the broad platform afforded by the expansive back and wings of a short-eared owl traveling at slower speed beneath it. At any rate, the fact remains that the gold-crest was seen to descend from the owl's back when the latter alighted, and its identity was placed beyond doubt by its subsequent capture. There is, verily, in heaven and earth much that is still undreamed of in our philosophy."

"J. E. HARTING."

Among the others of the Old World, who have discussed this belief among the primitive and ancient inhabitants of Asia and Europe, is Newton, whose remarks are worth quoting on the side of skepticism in respect to the possible truth of the belief.

"Of the same kind is the equally ancient belief that little birds get themselves conveyed from one country to another by their bigger brethren. Storks and cranes on their migration are manifest to beholders, but the transit of lesser birds of feeblér flight is seldom evident, and when, as often happens, large and small birds disappear or arrive simultaneously, what is more natural than that the ignorant should suppose that the latter avail themselves of the former as a vehicle? Thus is 1740 the Tartars of Krasnojarsk, and the Assanians assured J. G. Gmelin (*Reise durch sibirien*, 3, pages 393, 394) that when autumn came each Crane took a Corncrake on its back and transported it to a warmer land, while the well-known belief of the Egyptian peasant that Cranes and Storks bring a living load was not long since gravely promulgated in this country as a truth."¹

A strange fallacy regarding the seasonal movement of swallows seems to have engaged the speculation of primitive north Europeans and even of such eminent naturalists as Olaus Magnus, Bishop of Upsala, in 1669 and Gilbert White in 1776. They entertained the belief that swallows hibernated beneath the mud of ponds and lakes and emerged again in the spring. Even Cuvier in 1835 did not contradict this curious fable.

¹ Newton, Dictionary of Birds, page 550.

Unlike the cosmopolitan idea we have just discussed this particular belief seems to be restricted to the inhabitants of the northern parts of Europe. Pliny did not record it in the Mediterranean region. I never could discover its correspondent anywhere among the American Indians. They evidently observed the passage of birds with more accuracy, if we forget for a moment their legend of the small birds migration on the backs of geese.

On the whole the impressions one gets from the naming of birds and animals and the fables associated with them are often extremely pleasing.

We have discovered that the system of bird, naming among the northern aborigines seems to follow two lines. About one-third of the 72 native birds named and identified are named from their utterances. The rest of the names are of a figurative and descriptive origin.

Errors have of course been absolutely unavoidable in getting this list and the notes together. One of the chief causes, however, has been the uncertainty in the minds of the informants themselves as to the differentiation among birds that look alike to the naked eye. Again I found that informants did not always agree upon the names applied to birds even after they had settled the identity to their satisfaction. In the matter of onomatopœic names the birds seem to be somewhat more critically identified. Those who have attempted to interpret the songs of birds according to the European ear will find that the Indian names so derived are fully as diverse as are the song renderings given by ornithologists.

